

Tauschia tenuissima (Geyer ex Hook.) Math. & Const.

Leiberg's tauschia
Apiaceae (Parsley Family)

Status: State Possibly Extirpated

Rank: G3SX

General Description: Plants perennial, inconspicuous, blooming when less than 4 inches tall; bulb-like root, 1/2 inch in diameter; leaves few, glabrous, divided three or more times into 3-13 narrow, linear segments up to 2 inches long and 1/2 inch wide. The flowers are white- to cream colored; rays of the umbel mostly 4-8, elongating unequally, the longer ones 2-6 inches long; pedicels very short, less than 1/8 inch long. The fruits are somewhat elliptic and lacking side wings.

Identification Tips: The most distinctive features of this species are its early flowering, preference for meadowy habitats, and irregular umbels (see general description above). The species is difficult to locate unless it is found in rather dense patches. When growing in this manner, the distinctive creamy-white flowers are possible to identify, even from a distance. The genus *Tauschia* can easily be confused with the much larger genus *Lomatium*. Fortunately, no *Lomatium* species are found flowering in the same meadowy habitats in early spring. Mature fruits of *Lomatium* are flattened and winged, while those of *Tauschia* are cylindrical and lack wings.

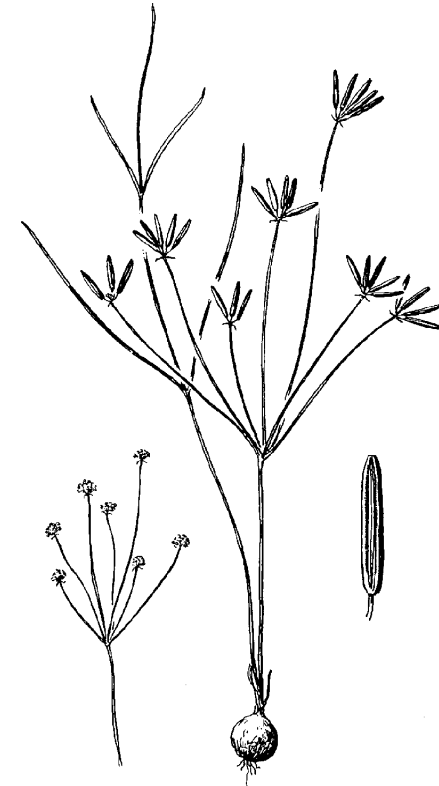
Phenology: Flowering occurs in early spring (April) often when the plant is only 1 inch tall. As the season continues (through May) the flower stems eventually elongate up to about 6 inches.

Range: Regional endemic; currently known from northern ID and historically known from Spokane County, WA in the Columbia Basin physiographic province.

Habitat: The species occupies grassy openings in moist to wet habitats. This includes meadows, river floodplains, and streambanks. Generally the areas are flat, although a few sites in Idaho were found on moderate slopes with perched water tables. Elevations range between 2580 to 3200 feet. The substrates tend to be productive silt/loams (loess) or alluvium. Some sites are known from the Palouse region in Idaho, however, the best sites are known from areas where meadows are surrounded by mixed coniferous forests of grand fir, Douglas fir,

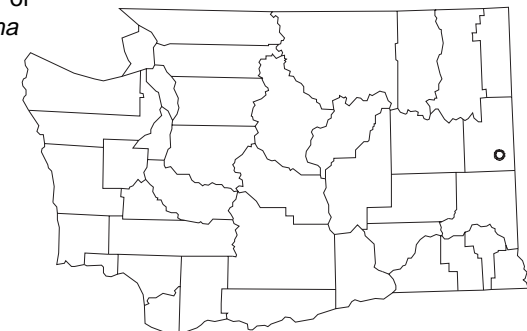
Tauschia tenuissima

Leiberg's tauschia



©1961 University of Washington Press. Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish.

Known distribution of
Tauschia tenuissima
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

Tauschia tenuissima

Leiberg's tauschia



John Gamon



Christine Lorain, Idaho Conservation Data Center



John Gamon

Tauschia tenuissima

Leiberg's tauschia

Habitat (continued): western white pine, shore pine, and larch. The species can even inhabit cold air drainages with scattered subalpine fir, although this is rare. Associated species include small-flowered blue-eyed mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), graceful cinquefoil (*Potentilla gracilis*), straight-beaked buttercup (*Ranunculus orthorhynchus*), wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium inflatum*).

Ecology: Unfortunately, the habitat this species prefers tends to have rich soils that are desirable for cultivation. It appears that Leiberg's tauschia is eliminated from a site once cultivation occurs. Fallow fields, even after many years, fail to revegetate with Leiberg's tauschia.

State Status Comments: No extant populations are currently known from WA.

Inventory Needs: A systematic inventory is needed in the Palouse/Spokane region of eastern WA.

Threats and Management Concerns: Much of what would historically have been suitable habitat has been lost through conversion to agriculture or has been degraded due to grazing and hydrologic changes. Herbicides, housing development, and invasion of reed canarygrass are other possible threats.

Comments: Synonymous with *Lomatium orogenioides* (Coult. & Rose) Math.

References:

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 614 pp.

Lorain, C.C. 1990. Report on the Conservation Status of *Tauschia tenuissima* in Idaho. Prepared for: Idaho Dept. Of Parks and Recreation. Unpublished report on file at: Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game, Conservation Data Center, Boise, ID. 25 pp.

Mathias, M.E. and L. Constance. 1973. Another look at *Leibergia* Coult. & Rose (Umbelliferae). *Madrono* 22: 71-73.